

How green is your job?

The term "green job" is used frequently but what does it really mean?

The topic of green jobs is hot in current political and economic discussions. President Obama has spoken numerous times on building a green economy, including an emphasis on the creation of millions of new green jobs in the near future (see www.barackobama.com). Clearly this is an important topic in modern political discourse, and as the purveyors of occupational information for the state of Utah, certainly we economists at the Department of Workforce Services can speak with absolute authority on the issue, right?

Before we can talk about things like the average wages or the projected growth rates of green jobs, we need to identify all the jobs in the economy that can be labeled "green." But first we need to take yet another step back and understand what the term "green job" actually means.

This is where we run into problems. There is no clear definition of a green job.

This may come as a surprise to some. The term is used so frequently that one would assume it's a well-defined idiom. However, thorough research,

reading everything from newspaper articles to technical papers written by major environmental policy gurus, did not return an official definition of a green job, but instead just created more confusion.

What has become clear is that the term is used to mean many different things. Therefore, at this point the best that can be done is to distill the many meanings into a few understandable categories. It appears that a green job can be one (or a combination) of four different things:

1. Environmental Experts—these are the workers who do things such as conduct research in order to identify sources of pollutants that affect the environment or investigate ways to eliminate environmental hazards. These jobs require very specialized expertise in the environmental sciences.

Examples:

- Environmental Scientist
- Conservation Scientist
- Hydrologist

2. Environmental Product Producers—workers in this category are tasked with



using the findings of the environmental experts to create technologies that eliminate or avoid environmental degradation. These workers design and build the tools that allow people to conserve energy and reduce pollution. These jobs may require some expertise in environmental science, but also in other areas such as engineering, technology, and mechanics.

Examples:

- Environmental Engineer
- Mechanical Engineer
- Protection Technician

3. Environmental Product Implementers—Here is where things start to get fuzzy. This category includes occupations that may be specialized to use the outputs created by workers in the previous category. Jobs in this category can be green or un-green. Specific training in environmental science is not necessary. Usually, just some additional training (which can range from low to high time intensity) to become familiar with the use of environmentally friendly products and techniques is all that is necessary to make the job green.

Examples:

- Eco-friendly Furniture Builder
- Green Landscape Architect
- Heating, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Mechanic and Installer
- Socially Responsible Financial Investors

4. Green-Clean—Now the definition of a green job goes from fuzzy to downright messy. Many industries are currently being pressured to shift away from environmentally unfriendly processes and products to cleaner technologies. In doing so, it is predicted by many politicians that jobs will be created and job duties will change. The change is at the industry level, and all jobs within the cleansing industries are being called green. From this definition blooms occupations such as green managers, green team assemblers, even green office clerks.

Examples:

- Green (fill in occupation title here!)

The bottom line is that one should be mindful of the context in which the term green job is being used. It can mean different things to different people. And

The definition of green jobs is not always clear; in this article they are categorized into four different areas.

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Green jobs
play an
important role
in our society.

while the absence of a consistent use of the terminology may make it difficult for us to measure the effects of the Green Revolution on the Utah economy, that in no way diminishes its importance to our workers, businesses, and society in general. 🌱

**For an explanation of the star ratings system or information on other occupations, go to <http://jobs.utah.gov/jsp/wi/utalmis/oidoreport.do>*

***Wages and openings information are for the general job title. Individuals with specific training in the environmentally friendly products and processes may be able to parlay that expertise into higher demand and/or wages.*

Green Jobs:	Hourly Median Wage	Total Annual Openings	Star* Rating
Category 1: Environmental Experts			
Environmental Scientist	\$30.81	40	5-star
Conservation Scientist	\$29.26	20	3-star
Hydrologist	\$32.00	n/a	n/a
Category 2: Environmental Product Producers			
Environmental Engineer	\$33.22	40	4-star
Mechanical Engineer	\$35.21	140	5-star
Protection Technician	\$20.41	20	5-star
Category 3: Environmental Product Implementers**			
(Green) Landscape Architect	\$26.87	10	2-star
(Eco-friendly) Furniture Builder:			
Cabinetmaker and Bench Carpenter	\$11.66	230	2-star
Upholsterer	\$12.14	30	1-star
Furniture Finisher	\$15.21	10	3-star
Heating, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Mechanic and Installer	\$17.00	210	4-star
(Socially Responsible) Financial Investor:			
Financial Analyst	\$27.59	60	4-star
Personal Financial Advisor	\$27.61	40	3-star
Category 4: Green-Clean			
Any job within an industry retooling for the Green Revolution			

Source: Utah Department of Workforce Services.